

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0242

AF/W FOR KIRKPATRICK

ACCRA FOR P.C. R/D GAYMON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OGEN
SUBJ: STATUS OF PEACE CORPS IN BENIN

REF: COTONOU 195

1. DURING FEB 16 COURTESY CALL ON GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF N.
AMERICAN AFFAIRS GNONLONFOUN, CHARGE RAISED QUESTION OF LETTEB
FROM MIN OF FIRST DEGREE EDUCATION TO PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR
(REFTEL). CHARGE SAID THAT WE WERE DISAPPOINTED BY LETTER SINCE
THE ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM WAS THE BACKBONE OF THE P.C.
PRESENCE IN BENIN. HE ASKED GNONLONFOUN WHETHER THE LETTER WAS
REFERRING ONLY TO SPECIFIC PROGRAM OF ENGLISH TEACHING OR
WHETHER GPRB HAD CHANGED ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD CONTINUING P.C.
PRESENCE. GNONLONFOUN REPLIED THAT, AS HE HAD NOT SEEN LETTER IN
QUESTION HE WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE ENLIGHTENMENT. HE SPECULATED,
HOWEVER, THAT EDUCATION MINISTER'S DECISION MAY BE LINKED WITH
FACT THAT BRITISH IN 1977 HAD PROVIDED APPROXIMATELY 20 SCHOL-
ARSHIPS FOR BENINESE TO STUDY TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE. THESE TEACHERS WERE DUE TO RETURN TO BENIN IN 1979
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AND WOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THE FIRST DEGREE EDUCATION MINISTRY'S
TEACHING PROGRAM.

2. GNONLONFOUN SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE TO EXPLORE
OTHER SECTORS IN WHICH P.C. COULD WORK IF THE ENGLISH TEACHING
PROGRAM IS, INDEED, PHASED OUT. CHARGE NOTED P.C.'S SUCCESS
IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, CITING SPECIFICALLY THE ANIMAL

TRACTION PROGRAM, AND SUGGESTED THAT AGRICULTURE MIGHT BE AN AREA IN WHICH P.C. COULD MAKE FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS. CHARGE MENTIONED LIKELIHOOD OF GARRETT VISIT AND TOLD GNONLONFOUN THAT THIS MIGHT BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE P.C. FUTURE ROLE IN BENIN. GNONLONFOUN AGREED AND SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE A FRANK DISCUSSION WITH GARRETT WHEN HE ARRIVES.

3. COMMENT: GNONLONFOUN APPEARED GENUINELY SURPRISED ABOUT THE CONTENT OF MIN OF EDUCATION'S LETTER TO P.C. DIRECTOR. HE SAID FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD GREAT DIFFICULTIES WHEN IT CAME TO THE P.C., SINCE OTHER MINISTERIES TENDED TO BYPASS FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WHILE THERE MAY BE OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED, HIS SUGGESTED EXPLANATION FOR THE PHASE-OUT OF THE ENGLISH TEACHERS SEEMS PLAUSIBLE. SINCE HE APPEARED TO WELCOME POSSIBILITY OF P.C. ACTIVITIES IN OTHER SECTORS, GARRETT MIGHT WISH TO COME ARMED WITH SOME SUGGESTIONS IN THIS REGARD.
THOMPSON

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